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AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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September 20, 2005

TO: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley 
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **KOINONIA FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Koinonia Foster Family Agency (Koinonia or Agency), a Foster Family Agency (FFA) service provider. The review was conducted by the Auditor-Controller's Countywide Contract Monitoring Division.

Background

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with Koinonia, a private, non-profit, community-based organization to recruit, train, and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children placed in foster care by DCFS. Once the Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Koinonia is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Koinonia has offices in Carson and Palmdale and oversees a total of 80 Los Angeles County certified foster homes in which 110 DCFS children were placed. Koinonia is located in the Second and Fifth Districts.

DCFS pays Koinonia a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Funding and Rate Bureau. Based on the child's age, Koinonia receives between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these amounts, the Agency pays the foster parents between \$624 and \$790 per month, per child. For Fiscal Year 2004-05, DCFS paid Koinonia approximately \$2,380,000.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Koinonia was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated Koinonia's ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our monitoring visit included verifying whether Koinonia received the appropriate reimbursement rate for each child and whether the certified foster parents received their portion of the reimbursement rate in a timely manner. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files, and interviewed Koinonia staff, the children and the foster parents. We also visited a sample of certified foster homes.

Results of Review

Generally, Koinonia provided the services outlined in its County contract. The foster parents stated that the services they received from Koinonia met their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoy living with their foster parents. Koinonia maintains documentation to support the services billed to DCFS and employs qualified staff to perform those services.

Koinonia needs to improve their oversight of the foster homes to ensure the homes comply with the provisions of Title 22 and the County contract. For example, four (57%) of the seven homes that we visited did not store toxins, detergents, or knives in a secured location. Two of the four homes also stored unsafe yard tools in unlocked tool sheds in their back yards. In addition, at the time of our review, four of Koinonia's eight social workers maintained an average caseload of 17 cases, which exceeded the maximum of 15 cases allowed by the County contract.

The details of our review, along with recommendation for corrective action, are attached.

Review of Report

On August 12, 2005, we discussed our report with Koinonia who was in general agreement with the findings. In their attached response, Koinonia management indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations contained in the report. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Koinonia for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (626) 293-1102.

JTM:MMO:DC

Attachment

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
Dr. David Sanders, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Miriam Golden, Director, Koinonia Foster Family Agency
Colleen Anderson, Community Care Licensing
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**COUNTYWIDE CONTRACT MONITORING DIVISION
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2004-2005
KOINONIA FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY**

PROGRAM SERVICES

Objective

Determine whether Koinonia Foster Family Agency (Koinonia or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We visited seven of the 80 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Koinonia billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for in November and December 2004 and interviewed seven of the 11 foster parents and eight of the 15 children placed in the seven homes. We also reviewed the documentation in the case files for the 11 foster parents and 15 children. In addition, we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

Generally, Koinonia provided the services outlined in its County contract and Title 22 regulations. The foster parents stated that the services they received from Koinonia met their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoy living with their foster parents. Koinonia maintains documentation to support the services billed to DCFS and each child's Needs and Services plan addressed the child's health, educational, emotional and social needs. Koinonia also maintained and documented the required monthly contacts with DCFS social workers. In addition, Koinonia provided Comprehensive Quarterly Reports to DCFS in timely manner.

Koinonia needs to improve their oversight of the foster homes to ensure that the foster homes are complying with all the provisions of Title 22 regulations and the County contract. We specifically noted the following:

Foster Home Visitations

- Four (57%) of seven foster homes visited did not store toxins and detergents in a secured location as required by the County contract. In addition, two of these four homes stored unsafe yard tools in unlocked tool sheds that were accessible to the children.
- For three (43%) of the seven foster homes visited, the foster parents did not secure kitchen knives as required by the County contract.

- For two (29%) of seven homes visited, the Agency did not maintain documentation of current auto insurance for the vehicles used to transport the foster children. The County contract requires that the Agency maintain records of current auto insurance of foster parents or their designated drivers. Subsequent to our review, the Agency obtained proof of auto insurance from the foster parents.
- For one (14%) of seven homes, the foster parents did not have an operable smoke detector in the hallway of the upstairs bedrooms or an upstairs emergency escape plan as required by the County contract.

Koinonia management needs to ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure the homes comply with the County contract requirements and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Koinonia needs to maintain records of current auto insurance of foster parents or their designated drivers.

Recommendations

Koinonia management:

1. **Ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure the homes comply with the County contract requirements and Title 22 regulations.**
2. **Maintain records of current auto insurance of foster parents or their designated drivers.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

Determine whether the program participants actually received the services that Koinonia billed DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed eight children placed in seven certified foster homes and seven foster parents to confirm the services Koinonia billed to DCFS.

Results

The program participants interviewed stated that the services received from Koinonia meet their expectations and their assigned social worker visited them regularly.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS**Objective**

Determine whether Koinonia social workers' caseloads do not exceed 15 placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We interviewed Koinonia's two supervising social workers and eight social workers. We also reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for November and December 2004.

Results

The supervising social workers supervised an average of four social workers during the months of November and December 2004. Four (50%) of the eight social workers maintained an average caseload of approximately 17 cases, which exceeds the maximum of 15 allowed by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, in February 2005, two of the four social workers continued to maintain an average caseload of 20 cases. Koinonia's management needs to maintain sufficient staffing levels so that each social worker's caseload does not exceed the maximum allowed by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. Subsequent to our review, the Agency hired a full-time social worker which resulted in each social worker maintaining a caseload within the maximum allowed by the County contract.

Recommendations**Koinonia management:**

3. **More closely monitor the social workers' caseloads to ensure that the actual number of cases assigned to each social worker does not exceed the maximum number established by the contract.**
4. **Hire additional social workers if the number of cases exceeds the maximum number allowed by the County Contract.**

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS**Objective**

Determine whether Koinonia's staff meets the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether Koinonia conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff.

Verification

We interviewed Koinonia's two supervising social workers and eight social workers. In addition, we reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

Results

Koinonia's administrators and social workers possess the required education and work experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Koinonia appropriately conducted hiring clearances and provided ongoing training to staff assigned to the County contract.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.



Miriam Golden
Chief Executive Officer

KOINONIA

FOSTER HOMES

Bringing Hope To a New Generation

August 8, 2005

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

Dear Supervisors:

The following letter is being written to address each recommendation listed in the foster family agency audit report.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to come out and evaluate our current program. Our goal is to provide the highest quality foster care services to those we serve. Your audit provides us with the opportunity to receive feedback on whether or not we are meeting this goal and most importantly, if we are holding to our promises and commitments. It was a pleasure interacting with our auditors, Brian Henricks and Cassandra Youngblood. Both Brian and Casandra were always respectful and courteous with our staff and those they interacted with. Their approach was one of teaching, consulting, and giving honest feedback on their experience of our program and staff. Overall, the audit process was positive, informative and helpful to Koinonia.

To follow is Koinonia's response to each "comment" and "recommendation" as outlined in the audit report.

1. **Auditor Comment:** "Four of the seven homes visited did not secure toxins and detergents as required by the County contract. In addition two of these four homes had unlocked tool sheds in their backyards that contained yard tools" (rakes and shovels).

Auditor Recommendation: Ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure the homes comply with the County contract requirements and Title 22 regulations.

Koinonia's Response: Although the County contract and Title 22 regulations do not state that detergents are required to be locked up and historically, detergents have only been required to be "inaccessible" to children, as stated in Title 22 regulations, Koinonia will comply with the recommendation to lock up detergents. Koinonia's current policy is also that sheds that contain poisons and dangerous

tools must be locked. Koinonia will ensure that staff monitor foster homes to lock sheds when used for storing poisons and/or dangerous tools. All appropriate Koinonia staff will be reminded of this policy.

2. **Auditor Comment:** "For three of the seven foster homes visited, the foster parents did not secure kitchen knives as required by the County contract".

Auditor Recommendation: Ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure the homes comply with the County contract requirements and Title 22 regulations.

Koinonia's Response: Although the County contract and Title 22 regulations do not specifically state that knives are required to be locked up and historically, knives have only been required to be "inaccessible" to children, as stated in Title 22 regulations, Koinonia will comply with the recommendation to lock up sharp kitchen knives. All appropriate Koinonia staff will be trained with regards to this recommendation.

3. **Auditor Comment:** "For two of seven homes visited, the Agency did not maintain documentation or verify during their monthly visits that the foster parents maintained current auto insurance for the vehicles used to transport the foster children...Subsequent to our review, the Agency obtained proof of auto insurance from the foster parents".

Auditor Recommendation: Maintain records of current auto insurance of foster parents or their designated drivers.

Koinonia's Response: For the past four years, Koinonia's policy with regards to "maintaining records" has been to document that the foster parents vehicle insurance and registration is current. This is documented on the "Foster Home Evaluation" (FHE) form in which a box is checked monthly stating that the vehicle insurance and registration is current as verified by the assigned Koinonia social worker. This policy and procedure was approved by LADCFS, Quality Assurance Division, in 2001 in accordance with the May 1, 2000 LA County contract which used language similar to the September 2003 contract. The 2000 contract stated that we needed to "monitor for compliance...and maintain records". The 2003 contract uses similar language in stating that "the contractor shall monitor and maintain records to verify that certified foster parents...insure their vehicles. Neither contract stated that the agency needs to maintain copies of the actual insurance document in the files. It should also be noted that documentation verifying that "the auto insurance was current" on the two homes in question was completed on the FHE form, in the file and reflected that the insurance was current. Based on the "Auditor Recommendation", Koinonia will continue to maintain records of current auto insurance and will also *begin keeping a copy of the auto insurance document of foster parents or their designated drivers on file*. All appropriate staff will be informed of this and a tracking system will be put in place to ensure compliance.

4. **Auditor Comment:** "For one of seven homes, the foster parents did not have an operable smoke detector in the hallway of the upstairs bedrooms or an upstairs emergency escape plan as required by the County contract".

Auditor Recommendation: Ensure that staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure the homes comply with the County contract requirements and Title 22 regulations.

Koinonia's Response: Koinonia's existing policy is that each active home is evaluated monthly with the use of the "Foster Home Evaluation" form. Part of this evaluation includes a walk through of the home setting to ensure compliance with Title 22 regulations and County contract requirements. Koinonia will continue this policy and review it with appropriate staff. Koinonia will also ensure that homes with a second story have an appropriate emergency escape plan.

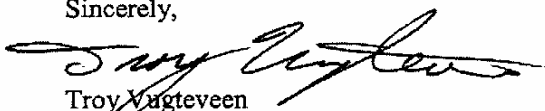
5. **Auditor Comment:** "The supervising social workers supervised an average of four social workers during the months of November and December 2004. Four of the eight social workers maintained an average caseload of approximately 17 cases, which exceeds the maximum of 15 allowed by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, in February 2005, two of the four social workers continued to maintain an average caseload of 20 cases...Subsequent to our review, the Agency hired a full-time social worker which resulted in each social worker maintaining a caseload maximum allowed by the County contract.

Auditor Recommendation: Koinonia management more closely monitor the social workers' caseloads to ensure that the actual number of cases assigned to each social worker does not continually exceed the maximum number established by the contract. If the number of cases assigned to the social worker continues to exceed the maximum number allowed by the County contract, Koinonia hire additional social workers.

Koinonia's Response: As was noted in the Auditors "Exit Conference – Discussion of Findings" report (4/8/05), "*The administrator stated that the agency tried to hire a full-time social worker during this time; however, they could not find a good candidate. The administrator provided a copy of the advertisement for the position. The Palmdale office recently hired a full-time social worker.*" As was stated above in the Auditors Recommendation, " *...closely monitor the social workers' caseloads to ensure that the actual number of cases assigned to each social worker does not continually exceed the maximum number established by the contract.*" At no time does Koinonia "*continually exceed*" the maximum number of clients that a social worker can carry. From time to time the caseload ratio may be exceeded for brief periods because of an employee's resignation or termination from the company, as was the case in this instance. Koinonia will continue to ensure that the actual number of cases assigned to each social worker *does not continually exceed* the maximum number established by the contract.

Again, thank you for taking the time to come out and evaluate our current program. Your audit has provided us with valuable feedback. Please call me if you have and additional questions or suggestions.

Sincerely,



Troy Yugteveen
Associate Executive Director

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